



The Teachings of Islam

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INTRODUCTION

Islam is not just a system; it is a means of becoming acquainted with the Lord of the Universe. A study of Islam should move one as proximity to God does. To understand Islam, one should read a book which does not just deal with creeds but also explains how one should establish one's relationship with the Creator; which does not just describe conditions which will prevail in the next life, but also instills one with fear and apprehension about what is to be one's lot in the hereafter; which penetrates to the spirit of worship and does not merely concern itself with the way it should be performed; which does not simply explain one's obligations to one's fellow-men, but also encourages one to fulfill these obligations and refrain from injustice.

This is an attempt to provide such a treatise on Islam. May God accept it.

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THE ONENESS OF GOD

Say: "He is God, the One, the eternally besought of all. He begets not, nor was He begotten. And there is none comparable to Him" (112:1-4).

All that is in heaven and earth gives glory to God. He is the Mighty, the Wise. His is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He ordains life and death and has power over all things. He is the First and Last, the Visible and the Unseen. He has knowledge of all things (57:1-3), and he that renounces idol-worship and puts his faith in God shall grasp a firm handle that will never break.

Allah: there is no God but Him, the Living, the Eternal One. Neither drowsiness nor sleep overtakes Him. His is what the heavens and the earth contain. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before and behind men. They can grasp only that part of His knowledge which He wills. His throne is as vast as the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not weary him. He is the Sublime, the Tremendous. God hears all and knows all.



God is the Patron of the faithful. He leads them from darkness to the light. As for the unbelievers, their patrons are false Gods, who lead them from light to darkness. They are the heirs of Hell and shall abide in it for ever (2:255-257). Yet there shall be no compulsion in religion. True guidance is never imposed by force.



ALL PRAISE IS DUE TO GOD

A tree is unaware of its own extraordinary significance. A flower does not realize what a delicate and exquisite masterpiece it really is. A bird is oblivious to its own breathtaking beauty. Though all things in this world are classic specimens of the most exquisite art, they never come to know themselves as such.

For whom, then, is this beautiful and gracious display? It is all for man's benefit. Man is the only being in the known universe who can perceive beauty in a thing and appreciate its excellence. God has created exquisite works of art in worldly form and enabled man to apprehend them. He has given man a tongue to express his wonder at and veneration of God's stupendous feats of creation. What he utters is praise, or admiration of God. It is a tribute of the most sublime sentiments, expressed in human words and offered to God.

Praise means being moved at the sight of God's craftsmanship and spontaneously expressing one's realization of His perfection. "God, all praise is due



to You. You are chaste and exalted. God, count me among the believers, and raise me not up blind like those who failed to acknowledge your perfection or perceive Your beauty.” Praise is constant remembrance of God in this manner, in Arabic or any other language.



THE ANGELS

Amongst the multitudes of beings created by God in His omnipotence are creatures of great luminosity called angels. They are divine servants of impeccable loyalty who convey God's commands throughout the length and breadth of the universe, attending to the workings of His immeasurable kingdom under His all-seeing eye. Their numbers perforce are legion.

The cosmic machine must run with flawless and never-ending consistency. The earth, moon, sun and stars must revolve in their pre-ordained orbits for all eternity. God has willed this to be so, and His angels are the divine instruments through which he ensures the perfect functioning of the universe.

From time immemorial a water cycle of awesome complexity has continued to support life in its myriad forms. Trees and plants of tremendous diversity emerge from the earth at every instant. A whole host of creatures from Man right down to the humblest insect are born and provided for every day. How is it then that such a great multiplicity of



events—all of them extremely complex—can take place contemporaneously?

The Prophets in their wisdom have taught that this is all part of a divine order which the Almighty controls through invisible angels acting as His intermediaries. It is they who carry out His commandments and communicate His word to the prophets. They preserve a record of man's actions by means of which God decides which individuals and which nations shall be rewarded or punished. It is the angels who take possession of the human soul at the moment of death, and it is they who will sound the last trumpet which shall throw the whole universe into disarray. It is then that the righteous shall dwell forever in Paradise, while the sinful shall be cast down into hell-fire and eternal damnation.



GOD'S PROPHETS

When a machine is produced it is accompanied by a set of instructions for its use. An engineer is also commissioned to give a practical demonstration of how the machine functions. Man is an even more intricately designed but animate machine. When he is born, he suddenly finds himself in a world where no mountain bears an inscription answering questions concerning the nature of the world, or explaining how he should live on earth. No educational institution produces experts who know the secret of life or who can provide man with practical guidance.

To satisfy this need felt by man, God sent His prophets to the world, every one of whom brought with him the word of God. In the scriptures revealed to them, God has explained the reality of life to man, and has made it clear what man should and should not do. They showed man what sentiments and ideas he should adopt; how he should remember his Lord; how he should live with his fellows, what he should associate himself with and disassociate himself from. The prophets' lives



are a practical demonstration of how a person should live a God-fearing life.

God has given everyone the power to distinguish between right and wrong. He has also placed countless signs in space and on earth from which man can learn. Moreover, His revelations have been set down in human language and several of His servants chosen from amongst mankind as prophets, so that there should be no doubt as to the true path.



TERMINATION OF PROPHETHOOD

The Arabian Prophet, may God's peace and blessings descend upon him, was the last of God's messengers. No other prophet will now come to the world.

All of God's prophets have taught one and the same religion. They spoke in different languages, but the religion they expounded was one. Since the followers of previous prophets were unable to preserve the prophetic teachings in their original form, messengers of God used to appear frequently in order to revitalize the true religion, and refresh people's memories of it. The Prophet Muhammad for his part initiated a revolutionary process which ensured the preservation of religion in its original form and obviated the necessity for other prophets to follow him by preserving the Book of God intact, in its original form.

God's final Prophet imparted to the true religion a stability which it had never had before. His own life was exemplary, as has been reliably recorded. It is noteworthy, too, that the community that



developed after the Prophet continued to demonstrate Islamic practices, like prayer in a practicable and imitable form. People of every subsequent age have found this religion exactly as it was when God's messenger preached it.

The preservation and continuity of religion are now ensured without prophets coming to the world. God's Book and the Prophet's Sunnah are now serving the same purpose which it had taken a succession of prophets to accomplish. It is the duty of their followers to carry on their mission.



THE RESURRECTION

Every night is followed by day. That which is concealed in night's darkness can be clearly seen in the light of day. In the same manner, this ephemeral world will be followed by an eternal one, in which all realities will become as clear as daylight. In this world, one is able to conceal evil under a false exterior. Some are eloquent enough to clothe their falsity in a righteous garb, whilst others mask their inner impurity under refulgent exteriors. The true character of every individual is shrouded in darkness, but the resurrection will tear all veils asunder and lay bare the reality.

What a startling revelation this will be! All men will be where they really belong, rather than in the false positions they occupy in this world. Many who wield worldly power will be humbled and reduced to helplessness. Many who sit in judgement will appear in the dock to be judged. Many who have a high status in life will appear more insignificant than insects. Many who have always had answers for everything in this world will be totally at a loss for words.



WHEN DEATH COMES

If one closes one's eyes, the whole world appears dark. Everything, from the radiance of the sun and the loftiness of the sky to the verdure of the trees and the splendour of the cities, is plunged into darkness, as if it were not there at all.

The after-life is also an absolute reality which we cannot see, because it belongs to a world in which our vision does not function. At the time of death the veil covering the unseen world will be removed from our eyes and we will be able to gaze on the world of eternity. It will be like having one's eyes closed and then suddenly opening them.

Imagine that a blindfolded person, totally unaware of his predicament, is made to stand in front of a live lion. Suddenly the blindfold is removed. The terror which would be experienced on beholding a lion ready to pounce on him would be far exceeded by the panic which would seize him when suddenly confronted with the world waiting for him after death.



A person who, in the world finds many kinds of support, will suddenly find that there is nothing left to rely on. Friends, a source of constant comfort and pleasure in this world, will have deserted him. His own family, for whom he had been willing to sacrifice anything, will have become alien to him. Material resources, on which he depended entirely, will be of no use. Matters one ignored as trivialities will suddenly loom before one in a form more solid than iron or rock. There will not be a single prop on which one can lean.



THE NEXT WORLD

The present world may seem to lack nothing; but the order of this world has been established with the trial of man in mind. According to God's scheme, only a world which leads up to reward and punishment can be considered ideal and permanent. This is not the case in the present world. So, when the period of trial is over, God will destroy this world and create another more complete one. There the evil will be separated from the righteous, and all will be confronted with the just consequences of their deeds.

The present world is full of strange paradoxes. Here, birds chant hymns of divine praise, while man recites eulogies to himself. Stars and planets continue their voyages without clashing with one another, while man willfully sets himself on a collision course with others. In this world there is no tree which undermines another, but men spend their lives plotting one another's destruction. Lofty, upright trees show their meekness by casting their shadows on the ground, but if man ascends to any heights he immediately becomes arrogant. This



attitude of man is totally contrary to God's will for His entire creation. Doomsday shall erase these paradoxes, the might of all save God shall be eradicated, and every will save His shall be negated.

When this period of trial has run its course, God will destroy the present world and create another one. There, the righteous and wicked will be separated from one another. The former will reside in paradise and the latter in hell-fire.



AS YOU SOW, SO SHALL YOU REAP

Only those who have sown crops can expect a harvest, and what is harvested will be whatever has been sown. The same is true of the next life: there, all men will reap as they have sown. Those who are always jealous, inimical, cruel, and conceited are like those who plant thorn trees. Those who plant thorns will eat thorns in the hereafter. On the other hand, whoever chooses the path of justice, benevolence and acknowledgment of the truth is like the planter of fruit trees. In the next life he will enjoy the sumptuous fruits of his own planting.

People adopt a rebellious stance in this world, yet continue to imagine that they will be raised up amongst God's obedient servants. They are willfully destructive, but still think that, in eternity, they will have a share in the fruits of constructiveness. Their lives are based on mere words and they believe that these words will take the form of reality in the hereafter. They hear the message of God and refuse to accept it; even so, they have the presumption to think that God will be pleased with them.



God beckons man towards paradise, the abode of eternal comfort and bliss, but man is lost in transitory and illusory pleasures. He does not heed the call of God. He thinks he is gaining while, in fact, he is losing. He believes that the worldly constructions which he is busy erecting will serve him well in the future, but he is only building walls of sand, which will fall never to rise again.



THE INHABITANTS OF PARADISE

Paradise is for those, and those alone, who reject all material forms of greatness in order to assert the majesty of Almighty God; who empty their hearts of every other affection and enshrine God therein.

Paradise is for the just, not the cruel, the humble, not the haughty. He who mistreats and degrades others, even when he has grounds for complaint against them forfeits the right to enter Paradise. Plotting to destroy others with whom one is on bad terms and taking delight only in one's own honour and esteem can close the gates of Paradise to one forever. Neither is one fit for Paradise if one's feelings of love and attachment are wounded by criticism of anyone other than God; for Paradise is the domain of those chaste souls who reserve their adoration for God alone, who delight in hearing God's praise and find solace in the sight of God's majesty.

No one who is blind to the truth can enter Paradise, for Paradise is for those alone who associate themselves so closely with the truth that they never

fail to see falsehood and reality for what they truly are.



THE STRAIGHT PATH

A train which runs on its tracks will have no trouble in reaching its destination. But should its wheels slip off the rails—no matter to what side—its journey will come to a sudden and disastrous end. Man's journey through life is in some ways on a parallel. If he goes off the rails, it will spell catastrophe. But if he continues to travel along the straight and narrow path which leads directly to God, he will safely reach his destination.

Many examples of human aberration—a 'going-off-the-rails'—can be cited: the satisfying of one's own selfish desires to the exclusion of all else; total absorption in the greatness of some human individual, living or dead; aiming, by preference, at unworthy objectives; obeying impulses of jealousy, hate and vindictiveness, dedicating oneself to any nation or party on the assumption that it is supreme. All of these paths are crooked and diverge from the true way. No one who chooses such a path can ever hope to reach his true goal in life.



It is a sad fact that one tends to stray from the straight path whenever one is obsessed with some thing, person or idea other than God. Whenever one's efforts are directed elsewhere, one is embarking on a detour which can never bring one back to God. Such deviation from the true path can cause man to go totally astray.

The only sure way to spiritual success is to focus one's attentions and efforts on God alone. This is the straight path and involves total attachment to God and a life lived out in complete accordance with His will.

Any path which is not directed towards God is a wrong turning, and will never lead Man to his true destination.



ISLAM—AN INTEGRAL PART OF LIFE

When a stone is dropped into a glass of water, it descends to the bottom and settles to one side. It is in the water but separate from it. On the other hand, if dye is put into the same glass, the dye and water combine. Now the water is not separate from the dye. Both have intermingled in such a way that no one can detect any difference between the two.

The relationship between Islam and a person should be like that of dye and water, not of stone and water. Islam should not just be an accessory to a Muslim's life: it should merge with his whole being. It should enter into his thoughts, moulding his intellect in its own fashion. Islam should become the eye with which he sees, the tongue with which he speaks, the hands and feet with which he performs his day-to-day functions. Islam should so take possession of a person that it excludes all else. Every statement should bear the stamp of Islam and every action should be dyed in Islamic colours.

If Islam is like a stone in water, then it is not Islam at all. Faith should be absorbed in a person like dye



dissolved in water. Just as the emotions of love and hate are felt by the whole body so, when one adopts Islam in the real sense of the world, it should become an issue affecting one's whole existence. The Muslim and Islam should become inseparably attached.



WORSHIP OF GOD

Worship, in form, consists of the performance of certain ritual actions. In essence, it is to form a central focus. From this point of view everyone is worshipping something or the other. It is a rare being who does not cherish some overriding ambition, which he will do his utmost to realize. All men feel some insufficiency in themselves and need some help from outside to make up for it. When one yearns for God alone and puts implicit trust in Him, one is, in reality, worshipping Him. To concentrate one's emotions on something else is to worship others besides Him.

A person who worships God will invoke Him alone, and the prescribed prayers are the day-to-day form which this supplication will take. The worshipper becomes so involved with His Lord that his requirements become minimal; a particular form that this diminution takes is fasting. His adoration of God compels him to strive towards God, and one historic manifestation of his longing is Hajj. He does unto others as he would be done by, and in *zakat* — charity — this takes a regular, practical form.



The whole life of a true worshipper of God, both inwardly and outwardly, becomes an act of worship, bowing only to God and fearing Him alone—putting His considerations first and foremost in all matters. Placing oneself totally in God's hands, one becomes God's own, and God becomes one's own. And one's heart overflows with the love of God.



FORMS OF WORSHIP

Worship is a reality, not just an outward form. What is true worship? It is an attachment to one object above all else. It presupposes such overwhelming preoccupation with that one object that everything else is reduced to insignificance. Claims to spiritual allegiance are of no value if one's chosen object of worship is other than spiritual.

When one considers a person worthy of being bowed down to, one is actually worshipping that person. When one attaches so much importance to some worldly gain that one tends to overlook all other considerations in order to achieve it, one is actually worshipping that gain. When one associates all one's hopes and ambitions with wealth, one is worshipping wealth.

In like manner, one is worshipping custom when one places it above all other demands. One is worshipping one's own self when, overwhelmed by selfishness and antipathy, one blindly seeks revenge. One is worshipping the standard of living when one is so obsessed with the idea of improving



it that one devotes one's entire time and earnings to that end. One is worshipping fame if one is so greedy for rank and prestige that one will do anything to raise one's status in life. One should never forget that man is being tried in this world to determine whether he is willing to devote himself entirely to God to the exclusion of all else, and to give proof of whether he dedicates himself to God, revering Him, depending upon him and serving Him as he should.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MUSLIM

When a Muslim awakens early in the morning, he thanks God for putting him to sleep and awakening him. After his ablutions, he leaves for the mosque in order to join his brethren in attesting to God's divinity and his own willingness to serve Him. He then ascertains what his Lord expects of him by reading an excerpt from the Qur'an. Then he starts the day's work. There are three prayer times during the day: afternoon, late afternoon and evening. By leaving his work and standing before his Lord at these times, he shows that he gives precedence to God above all else in life.

While satisfying his hunger and thirst, every fibre of his being gives thanks to God. "Lord," he exclaims, "I am wonder-struck at the water you have created for me to quench my thirst with, and the food you have provided for the satisfaction of my hunger!" When success comes his way, he considers it to be a gift from God and offers thanks for it. He considers failure to be the result of his own errors, so he seeks to make amends. When dealing with others, he is conscious of God's presence, which makes him



aware of the fact that one day he will be held to account for his actions. When night falls, and he is free of all commitments, he once again washes and, after offering the night prayer, goes to bed. As he drops off to sleep, this prayer is on his lips: “Lord, my life and death are in Your hands. Forgive me and have mercy on me.” It is evident then that a Muslim does not organize his life-pattern independently. When he arranges his life, it is with God clearly before him.



GIVING AS GOD WILLS

Man's life and property are gifts of God. He owes everything he possesses to God alone. The only way to give thanks for these innumerable gifts is to dispose of them as God wishes. Such expenditure of one's wealth is symbolic of one's complete trust in God.

Man owes whatever he earns in this world to the fact that God has given him hands and feet to use for this purpose. He has endowed man with eyes and a tongue with which to see and speak. He has blessed him with an intellect which enables him to think and plan. At the same time God has made the world subordinate to man. If the world and that which it contains had not been placed at man's disposal, his physical and mental capabilities alone would never have enabled him to derive any benefit from the world around him. If the wheat grain had not grown in the form of a crop but had stayed lying on the ground like a pebble, it would have become impossible for man to harvest grain from the land. If the powers of nature had not performed their specific functions, electricity could not have



been produced, and vehicles would not have been able to move. Whatever man earns in this world is a direct favour from God. In return, man should spend his earnings in a way which would meet with God's approval. He should use his money to help the poor and spend of the wealth which God has granted him in the ways of God has specified.

Real charity is that which is given for God's sake alone, not for fame, self-esteem or worldly reward. Wealth saves one from worldly hardship; that which is given away for God's sake saves one from the hardships of the life after death.



ISLAMIC CHARACTER

An Islamic character is a divine character. It is to treat others with the same generosity and charity as God shows to man. The Quran has set the pattern in this matter by stating: “If you are merciful, forgiving and magnanimous, then God is the Forgiving, the Merciful.” That is to say that if a relationship with someone turns sour, or some difference of opinion occurs, one should adopt a posture similar to God’s. He forgives people their mistakes and does not deprive them of His mercies because of their errors; one should act in like manner. If something is said which hurts one’s feelings, or one is treated in a disconcerting manner, the transgressor should not be turned against for this reason alone; rather one should overlook his mistakes and treat him as if nothing had happened.

To put it in a word, magnanimity is what marks an Islamic character. Generally one treats others according to what they have said or done with regard to one. A Muslim should transcend such considerations in his treatment of others. His reactions should be moulded by God’s

commandments, which means maintaining the highest standard of helpfulness and benevolence towards others. If one cannot actually be of use to others, then one must at least avoid harming them, and must spare them any suffering on account of ill-judged words and actions. Islamic character ceases to be such on any plane lower than this.



HUMILITY—THE FOUNDATION OF UNITY

The basis of unity is humility. If everyone puts others before himself, then the question of friction does not arise, for disunity stems from everyone putting himself first and wishing that he and his utterances should be given supremacy, no matter what the circumstances. If no one considered himself superior, what would there be to quarrel about?

Clashes of interest and outlook are bound to occur in a society where people live in close contact with each other. When this happens, superiority complexes are apt to surface. Everybody tends to feel sure that his own opinion is correct, that his rights supersede others', and that his own interest must be protected at all costs. Considerations such as these alienate people from one another, which results in disharmony, and if all parties remain adamant, friction can do little but escalate. If, however, one of the parties to a dispute adopts a humble attitude and is willing to stand down, then discord will vanish automatically, and harmony



will prevail. Unity can exist only by sinking personal differences, by recognizing the rights of others to disagree and, where agreement is impossible, by bringing matters to a conclusion by agreeing to disagree in a spirit of goodwill.

It is only natural in a society that opinions should clash and grievances arise. These things cannot be eliminated entirely. There will be unity only when people cease to harbour grievances, and when they can live in harmony notwithstanding their differences.

WHO SHOULD PREACH?

A sage once said that the desire to preach should have the same compulsive quality about it as the desire to satisfy any other normal human urge. Preaching is not like playing a record; nor should it be aimed at eliciting applause from an appreciative audience. Preaching is an externalisation of inner conviction. It is communication to others of a discovered reality; to be a living witness to a truth long hidden from people's eyes. This does not mean just putting a few words together; it is an extremely difficult task. One can only accomplish this task when one feels so desperate an urge to convey one's message that one is ready in the process to face unpopularity and self-sacrifice.

The same applies to writing. Before putting pen to paper, one should study so much that knowledge of itself starts overflowing from one's mind. It is only after sifting through all the available material on any relevant topic, and feeling an irresistible urge to add something of one's own, that one should begin to write. Those who write without experience or inspiration are only defacing the paper on which





they write, and those who speak without feeling the compulsion to do so are only adding to noise pollution.

Preaching is not a game: it is representation of God on earth; it is only those who have effaced themselves before God who qualify for this privilege. Those who try to preach without such qualifications do greater harm than good.



ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE TRUTH

God manifests Himself on earth through truth. Disbelief in the truth is disbelief in God. One can perpetrate no greater crime on earth than to refuse to accept the truth after it has been made plain. Truth emanates from God, so whoever rejects it is, in fact, rejecting God.

There is nothing strange about the truth. It is inherent in human nature. Since it is so familiar to mankind, why do people fail to accept it? The answer is that they are psychologically inhibited from doing so. Acceptance of the truth might disrupt their materially-oriented life-pattern. They might have to prepare themselves for a lowering of their worldly status. If the truth is taught by some insignificant person against whom they are prejudiced, they feel reluctant to acknowledge the veracity of his message. Psychological impediments such as these dominate the mind and prevent straight thinking. They cause one to reject something which a little honest thought would surely have led one to accept as the truth.



Since man is being tested in this world, God does not make himself manifest in visible form; He appears in the form of truth. Man must endeavour to recognize truth as enshrining God and bow down before it. Whenever truth appears on earth, it is as if God has appeared in all His majesty. If one rejects it on the grounds of prejudice, pride or expediency, then one has rejected God Himself. This action shows that one has failed to recognize God in the truth. One has put oneself above God and given precedence to one's own requirements. God will have scant regard for such people on the Day of Judgement and, on that day, whomsoever God scorns will find no refuge on earth or in heaven. They will wander helplessly, forever abject and forlorn.



THREE TYPES OF HUMAN BEING

On the highest plan of Islamic faith, one should fear God, always turning to Him, and acting as if one knows that He is watching over one. People who are so inclined may never have seen God, but they live more in awe of Him than of all the visible powers. When they reach God their hearts will already have been turned towards Him, and God desires and loves such servants. When they enter the life of eternity, having borne worldly affliction for God's sake, their Lord will felicitate them, and bid them come inside a paradise of fresh green gardens, in which they shall forever abide. "There", as the Qur'an states, "their desires will be more than fulfilled by God!" (50:31-35).

Then there are those who believe in God and do good. They may sometimes err, but they never persist in their misconduct. They acknowledge their faults and constantly seek God's forgiveness. They repent and incessantly attempt to make amends to their Lord. Hopefully, God will be merciful to them. When they turn towards God, God also relents



towards them, for He is the All-Forgiving, the All-Merciful (9:102).

There are yet others who have taken to self-worship, materialism and arrogance. They never, for God's sake, constrain themselves in thought, word or deed. They live for themselves rather than for God, and think of the world rather than the after-life. How, then, can they hope to find a place of honour in the everlasting world of God? Nothing but hell-fire awaits such people in eternity. (11:15-16).



THE REWARD OF GOD

Closeness to God should mean that He is ever in one's thoughts. Awareness of God's greatness should reduce one's own being to insignificance. Heaven and hell should be so much a part of faith, that one should be more concerned with well-being (or affliction) in the after-life than one's condition in the present world. On so high a spiritual plain should one be that one's faults should begin to appear in the same light as an enemy's. Personal prejudice should play no part in decision-making and even those with whom one disagrees, or against whom one bears some grudge, should be prayed for from the heart. Denial of truth should be seen as self-destruction and destroying another's home should be regarded as tantamount to setting one's own home ablaze. Such is the God-fearing life and only those who lead it will be given a place in God's paradise.

To His true servants in this world, God has promised supremacy. But this is not the real reward for their piety; it is merely a forerunner of the true recompense which will await them in eternity. It is



then that they will be honoured with everlasting supremacy. God will rid them of their fear and grief, and accord to them His everlasting beneficence.



THE ISLAMIC LIFE

Islam can be summed up very briefly: fear of God and benevolence towards others. A Muslim is one who realizes God's omnipotence and man's utter helplessness in comparison. The power which man apparently wields has been given to him only so that he may be tested by it. When his trials are at an end, God will reveal to him a hitherto unseen world. Then, astoundingly, God's divinity on the one hand and man's total helplessness on the other, will become as plain as daylight. There will be such revelations of reality on that day as man will have no choice but to accept.

The Muslim is fully able to anticipate the advent of this day before its actual arrival. He lives as if he is actually seeing God watching over him. When he speaks, his faith holds his tongue in check, constraining him to speak the truth or else remain silent. When he walks, it is as if God were in front of him, forcing him to proceed and he would never dare incur his Lord's displeasure.



Such a person bears nothing but goodwill towards God's servants. He regards them with compassion, for that is the way God looks upon them. When he has dealings with others, he judges himself by the same just criteria and values as the Creator and Master of the universe will eventually apply to all beings.



LIFE IN ACCORDANCE WITH REALITY

What is Islam? Islam means living in accordance with nature; living as one ought, face to face with reality. Man did not create himself: he was created by God. To live in accordance with reality, then, is to acknowledge the greatness of God and show appreciation of His favours. The emotions of love and fear are inherent in man. He wants something on which he can depend and upon which he can focus his efforts. If he lives in accordance with reality, he will focus all his attention on God alone for, besides Him, all things have been created: nothing besides Him has any power.

Adam is the father of all past, present and future men, so life in accordance with reality is one of benevolence to others, as if one were dealing with one's own brothers and sisters. Everyone has a conscience, which favours justice and despises cruelty and injustice. Life in accordance with reality, then, is one of kindness and justness. Death is bound to come one day. It will deprive everyone of his worldly possessions, so one who lives in accordance with reality will look at the ups and



downs of life as transitory and trivial. Everybody, irrespective of worldly status, should be regarded as God's servant. When one is confronted with a truth one might feel disposed to deny it. But one should realize that, one day, everyone will have to accept truth and falsehood for what they are. One should willingly accept today what one will have to accept tomorrow.



FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW

If one wears ordinary spectacles, everything will appear as it is. If, on the other hand, one wears dark glasses, everything will take on different hue, depending on the colour of the glasses. The same applies to the human intellect. When one observes someone, one does so through the lenses of one's own intellect. If the lens is clear, then everything will appear as it is. If it is tinted, then everything, regardless of its true nature, will take on a false appearance.

The human mind is either God-oriented or self-oriented. It sees people through either divine or personal lenses. These are two very different ways of seeing things. Those who look at matters from God's point of view are realistic in their outlook. They judge things on merit, not on the basis of their own biased opinions. They see people as they really are, for that is how God views them. Others see things quite differently. They view people in the light of their own interests and prejudices. Their friends are beautiful, their enemies are ugly. Members of their own clique are "white", strangers



“black”. The true Muslim sees everybody from God's point of view. He does not judge others on the basis of personal opinion.

It is this divine vision which really makes a person. It makes one treat others as they should be treated. It makes one realistic as far as this world is concerned and righteous with regard to the world hereafter.



CARE IN ALL MATTERS

An unbeliever tends to be insensitive, but a believer should have a heightened awareness of what is right and wrong. The believer's sensitivity is not limited to God and objects generally regarded as sacrosanct; it embraces every object of creation.

When dealing with others, be they weak or strong, a believer is always scrupulous about giving them their full due as prescribed by God. He always treats animals humanely. If he is forced to exterminate some pest, he does not do so in a cruel manner. His sensitive nature would not allow him to cut down a tree or crush a flower for no good reason. He is careful not to be extravagant in his use of water, for that would amount to misuse of a gift of God.

Once a person has had the circumspection and sensitivity of faith instilled in him his disposition and actions are moulded accordingly. Faith controls his manners, speech, movements, dealings, and utilization of animate and inanimate objects. Even in emotional situations, he does not act rashly; he



does not treat anybody cruelly or unsympathetically.

True belief involves a scrupulous awareness of the fact that God is watching over one, and will take one to task for what one does, both in secret and in public. A man thoroughly imbued with faith will necessarily be a more caring person.



RELINQUISHING POWER FOR GOD

All power in this world belongs to God. None else has any strength. Nevertheless, God has granted man freedom in this world so that he may be tested. Man is the only creature free to exercise his will in a world which is otherwise entirely subjugated to the will of God. God wants to see how man utilizes the power and free will with which he has been endowed. If he is realistic, he will submit to God. Otherwise, deluded by his apparent freedom, he will continue in his rebellious ways.

Paradise is for those who have power, but disclaim all pretence to it; who fear God, though they are in a position to do the opposite; who have the chance to attach importance to themselves, but refrain from doing so, putting God first.

Such people consider that they are directly provided for by God, though such provision is concealed beneath a veil of worldly causes. They have opportunities to oppress and exploit people, but fear of God prevents them from doing so. At times they feel tempted to indulge in anger, hate



and revenge, but patience cools their anger, and forgiveness obliterates any hostility or vengeance which stirs in their hearts. Where people are full of praise for them, they are balanced enough to retain their humility. God may have endowed them with abundant wealth, but they spend their wealth as God would wish. It is not personal satisfaction that they seek; their only desire is to please their Lord. They do not live for themselves; they live only for God.

The exquisite world of paradise is for those who, of their own free will, subordinate themselves to the will of God. It is reserved for those who adhere to God's path, though they have been given rein enough to stray from it if they so desire. It will be the reward of those who, though not compelled to do so, obey God's commandments.



THE TRIAL OF MAN

Life is one long trial. The great paradox is that while some enjoy life, others undergo continuous suffering. In reality, however, all are the same, for their actions are being scrutinized. Everyone is being examined; it is only the conditions under which this examination is being conducted that vary.

Another factor in the trial of man is that God has made some weak and others strong. There is always the temptation to succumb to the mighty and to exploit the weak. But to do this is to take the surest road to hell. Only those who consider what is right, irrespective of circumstances or of the individuals they deal with, will prove themselves worthy of paradise, for it is often the underdog who is in the right and the mighty who are in the wrong. Even when others behave in a troublesome way, the best way to react is with mildness and circumspection, and no matter what the provocation, one should endeavour to be impartial and just.



The manner in which people respond to the various situations which confront them in life will determine their eternal abode. Those who yield to the mighty and oppress the weak will surely be punished in hell, and they would do well to remember that there are two paths which open out before them every day, one of which leads to hell and the other to paradise.



TESTING MAN'S FITNESS

Man has complete freedom of will in this world, but only God can actually make things happen. Man is just being put to the test on earth. His reactions to various circumstances are being scrutinized.

Some respond to events in a patient, just and reasonable manner. Their actions earn them credit. Others react quite differently. Their hot-headedness, cruelty, and blindness to the truth earn them nothing but blame. Some profess to be Muslims. But if they adopt a disparaging, deceptive and malicious attitude towards others, their claim is immediately proved false. God will particularly help those whom they wrong in order to show where the truth lies. Some uphold the truth, yet they are left in a helpless and forlorn state. Others are blind to the truth, yet have every conceivable worldly luxury at their disposal. This situation may seem paradoxical, but it occurs for a reason: to set apart those who cling to externals and deserve to be classed along with other deniers of the truth.



Everything man experiences in this world, be it power or weakness, wealth or poverty, is a test. Worldly triumph is no cause to rejoice; nor should worldly loss cause one grief. Both winner and loser are being tested to see how they react to their respective situations. It is on the basis of this reaction that they will be adjudged fit for either heaven or hell.



SOME EARN THE WORLD, OTHERS ETERNITY

A man set on making money, chooses a lucrative profession and devotes all his time and energies to it. If his efforts yield financial reward, well and good. If not, he is upset about his choice of profession. If he is after fame and prestige, he looks for a career which holds the promise of publicity. He thrives on popularity and esteem. If these things elude him, he feels as if all is lost. If a man is thirsty for power, his overriding ambition is to rule others. He longs to have people under him and to control their fortunes. Such people seek worldly reward for their actions, but no matter how much they manage to acquire in this world, they will have no share in the hereafter.

God's true servant on the other hand, seeks everlasting reward for his actions and concentrates on an eternal goal. While people are busy in worldly affairs, he functions in the silent world of nature. While people display their fervour in public, he struggles on in seclusion. He has no thought of worldly fame or success. He longs solely for God's



mercy and grace. Outwardly he belongs to this world, but mentally and emotionally he dwells in the next. People are absorbed in the world of forms, whereas he is lost in God's hidden cosmos.



STIMULUS AND RESPONSE

Human character can be guarded from the way people respond to day-to-day events. Everything that happens affects one in one way or another. The kind of response we make to what is going on around us is determined by our mentality. If one is unmindful of God, one will react in whatever manner one's own desires and interests demand. If, however, one's faith is strong, each and every event throughout one's entire life reminds one of God; the entire range of one's emotions is then concentrated not on oneself, but on God.

Fortunes in life never cease to fluctuate. Ease is soon followed by hardship. It is never long before praise and approval give way to criticism and accusation. No sooner do events begin to follow a satisfactory course than they suddenly take a turn for the worse. Ups and downs of this nature are all in the nature of a trial. If one is to succeed in life's trial, these changes of fortune should turn one more and more towards God and away from the self, and, humble and resigned when stricken by misfortune, one



should be thankful in one's heart for the happiness and comfort granted by God.

People's response to various circumstances is being put to the test on earth. This is what their worldly trial really consists of. If given wealth and power, they become proud, then they are failures, but if they remain humble under the same circumstances, they have succeeded. They have failed if they are obstinate and contemptuous towards their rivals or opponents: if they are unjust to others, they are bound to come to grief themselves: if they are fair to all and sundry, they will emerge triumphant from life's trial.



IT'S SELECTION TIME

The constellation closest to earth contains at least two hundred million stars and countless such constellations are scattered throughout space. The universe is incredibly vast but, as far as we know, there is only one solar system and, within that solar system, our planet, earth, is situated. There is no planet to compare with earth in the entire universe and, upon it, dwells that unique being called man. Man lives. He moves and talks. He sees and hears. He thinks and understands. He is responsible for his actions. There is no doubt about man's uniqueness. But the question remains: why has God created him so? The answer is: in order to select those who will abide in the even more exquisite and ideal world of paradise.

The world is full of creatures who, subject to God, involuntarily do as God bids them. God wills it, however, that man should be obedient of his own accord. God seeks those who are willing to renounce the power that they possess; who manage to see God despite His invisibility; who belong to the hereafter, though they dwell on earth; who



accept and obey, though they are capable of denial and rebellion. Those who display such propensities in the world will be welcomed to paradise in the hereafter. Paradise is an ideal abode for ideal individuals. So enchanting and alluring will it be, that no one in it will ever have a feeling of tedium. No pain or apprehension will mar its delight. Man will find there all that he desires.



PEOPLE OF GOD

Everyone lives for something or another. Some live for their families. Some for money. Some for worldly tribute and power. A life which revolves around these things cannot be a life of faith. A life of faith is one lived for God's sake alone. When one lives for God, one's entire life revolves around Him. One's thoughts and desires are focused on Him alone. One thinks about what pleases and displeases God when one speaks. One limits one's movements to the bounds that God has laid down.

The human brain inevitably forms some sort of response to any message that it receives. Those who live for God will produce divinely inspired responses. Their utterances will not be based on the promptings of their own selves. They consider what will be acceptable to God and what will be cast aside when they come before Him. If their conscience tells them that certain words are displeasing to God, then they avoid them. They only say what they know God would like them to.



When one faces some problem, one immediately chooses a method of dealing with it. If one lives in God, then one will not act on impulse; one will consider what is just and unjust in God's sight. Though fame and wealth may lie on the path of injustice, one forsakes that path. One adheres to the path of justice, though it may incur worldly loss and unpopularity. One looks at everything from God's point of view, and not from any other standpoint.



ABSTAINING FROM BASENESS

A believer makes mistakes, but does not stoop to baseness. Mistakes are often made in sudden fits of emotion, but, when the passion cools, one becomes conscious of the error and feels ashamed of one's own wrongdoing. The next step is to seek out the wronged person, beg forgiveness and make amends. If compensation can be given, well and good. If not, one prays: "Lord, forgive my mistake and accept this salutary prayer from me on behalf of the person I have wronged!"

A mean person would behave in quite a different way, for meanness is a permanent state of mind rather than a temporary condition. A person who has stooped so low feels neither shame nor any urge to make amends for what has passed. In fact, he would be happy to see his opponent suffer more. If he has a grievance against someone, he is not satisfied merely with a severance of relations, but does his utmost to lay that person low. He makes slanderous accusations and concocts vicious plots against him. He does not just point out a person's errors; he seeks to discredit that person completely



and isolate him from the rest of society. He tries to undo whatever his enemy has accomplished and bring all his gain to nought. This all shows a lack of magnanimity and, as such, is unbecoming to a believer.

Refusal to admit one's faults is contemptible. It is likewise despicable to favour one's own kith and kin, while treating others with disdain. A base person cannot rise above envy and vindictiveness. Such a person is a long way from God and close to the devil.



A BELIEVER LIVES FOR GOD

A small infant owes everything to his parents. His life revolves around them. So a believer's life should revolve around God. God should dwell in his reflections. He should fear and love God alone. He should do everything for God's sake. He should put total trust in God, his Guardian and Protector.

Usually, people live for mundane things. That is why they never find contentment. They either live for personalities or for worldly splendours. Either their families mean everything to them, or else they have made prestige and wealth their ultimate goals in life. Some are obsessed with hatred. Some live to thwart, humiliate or ruin others. All these ways of living are based on false notions. They are placing total reliance on things which are ephemeral and out of place in God's cosmic order. These things can never give man true peace of mind. They do not allow one to proceed along the divine path, which is the only road to salvation. In this world all things live for God. If man succours himself otherwise, he will eventually find himself helpless and on a false path.



A startling transformation takes place in a person who starts living for God. He finds silence more gratifying than speech. He is happier to obey than to rebel, to forgive than to hold grudges, he tries to hide other's faults. He is unassuming and self-effacing. He is not interested in occupying a privileged position.



SETTING ONESELF RIGHT

A traveller buys a ticket for a certain destination, then boards a train bound for another. He does not realize his error until the train has left the station. Imagine how he feels! The seat in which he was relaxing now gives him nothing but discomfort. As soon as the train reaches the next station, he will get off in order to return and catch the next train.

A believer's attitude to his eternal journey is the same as this traveller's. Whenever anything happens which will divert him from the path to his eternal destination and will adversely affect him in the next life, he is extremely ashamed of himself. He wastes no time in admitting his mistake. He gets his bearings and immediately starts travelling in the right direction.

The true believer may err, but he turns away from his wrongdoing. He may be angry for some reason, but then his anger cools and he becomes forgiving. Self-respect does not prevent him from admitting his mistakes. If, however, a person persists in his evil ways; if he is not ready to forgive others on



being offended by them; if he refuses to admit his own mistakes and shortcomings; then, though he may lay claim to being a true Muslim, he is not one in God's sight. If a person does not want to admit his faults in this world, he will have no difficulty in finding words to justify them. In some cases worldly status is enough to screen a person's faults. In eternity, however, such things will be of no help to anybody. There, realities will become so plain that even the blind will be able to see them.



THINKING ON A HIGHER PLANE

In stormy weather, small, weak-winged birds are trapped by the storm. Large birds, with their strong wings, can fly above it. A person who can ride above his circumstances is like one of these big birds which can ride any storm.

Likewise there are two levels of thinking. Some think in relation to their immediate circumstances. Their thoughts are inextricably linked to the issues in which they are involved. Others, like big birds of the storm, rise above their immediate situation. Their thoughts are not affected by circumstances. They form their opinions on a higher level.

Believers think in 'big bird' style. They rise above their circumstances. Even when in trouble, they are thankful to God. In the most distraught of conditions they stick to their religion. They are benevolent and just towards others, even if they have grievances against them. Their personalities develop irrespective of circumstances. They are not products of situations, dwelling as they do outside



life's storm, and not allowing themselves to be tossed about in its turbulent winds.

Unbelievers react to life's problems in an unreflective way, whereas believers always look at matters positively. Unbelievers increase their own worth at the expense of others; believers know that the only way to true success lies in developing one's own potential. Unbelievers are concerned with worldly things; believers with eternity. An unbelieving heart is attached to human beings; a heart full of faith is always with God.



REALIZING ONE'S OWN MISTAKES

People who are in the habit of filling out their sentences with unnecessary words are usually quite unaware of their own habit. If however, someone else, does the same thing, they notice it immediately.

This is a common human fault. People are usually well-informed about others' faults. They ferret out shortcomings in other people, but pretend to know nothing about what they and their friends do wrong. Yet, it is acknowledgement of one's own faults rather than skill in noticing those of others which will benefit one in God's presence. To notice others' mistakes is to show God that one has been altogether too attentive to worldly matters. On the Day of Judgement, a severe punishment awaits one who has been guilty of their error.

God has given man the power of distinguishing between good and evil. People should use this power to avoid paths leading to hell and keep to the road destined for paradise. If one is following a false path oneself, one's exhortation of others to the



true way shows an obvious misuse of one's discretion. One is using it to accelerate one's own journey to hell, for, to preach what one fails to practice is an offence in the eyes of God; it is not an action which will earn one any credit.



A BELIEVER'S WEALTH

It is written in the Qur'an; "To those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of God, give tidings of a painful doom. The day will surely come when their treasures will be heated in the fire of hell, and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded therewith. They will be told: "Here are the riches which you hoarded for yourselves. Now taste what you used to hoard" (9:35). When this verse was revealed, the companions of the Prophet wondered what kind of wealth they should accumulate instead. Umer, may God be pleased with him, went to the Prophet and put this question to him on their behalf. The Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, replied: "Each of you should acquire a heart grateful to God, and a tongue accustomed to His remembrance, and a believing spouse who will be of assistance in matters relating to eternity." (Ibn Majah)

Wealth is of use only when it can solve the problems of life. The greatest problem of believers concerns the next world, so they consider real



wealth to be that which will be of use to them there. In order to obtain such wealth, one should always be thankful to God for His blessings. One's attachment to God should be such that He is always in one's mind and heart. If one has set one's sights on life everlasting, one will prefer one's companion in life to be similarly disposed. There is no greater wealth in life than a partner who, instead of enticing one towards ephemeral, mundane pleasures, assists one on the path of eternity.

People see wealth in gold and silver, but a believer's wealth is God. That which brings him nearer to his Lord and makes him eligible for God's blessings in the life to come, is to him of supreme importance.



MAKING A LIVING

A believer should look at his means of subsistence as a necessity; he should never make these means his goal in life. His objective should be eternity, and worldly things should be just the bare necessities. The difference between believers' and unbelievers' attitudes to the world is essentially one of priorities. Unbelievers aim to make as much money as possible: believers should aim to make a living as honestly as they can. Unbelievers expect their careers to pave the way to the fulfillment of their ambitions: believers should merely seek to be independent of others. Unbelievers live on a mundane plane—they want to receive their earnings in this world. Believers live on an other-worldly plane and wish to see their efforts rewarded in eternity. They are just filling in time in this world. Their ambitions will be fulfilled in the next.

Making a living is a matter of crucial importance to every individual. No one is exempt from the struggle for subsistence. Islam simply makes sure that it remains a matter of necessity and does not



become the sole objective of anyone's life. The Islamic view is that one's livelihood should not become the be-all and end-all of a person's life; that one's heart should be with God, even when engaged in one's worldly tasks; that one should have total trust in God.

Unbelievers use wealth to improve their standard of living. Believers, on the other hand, spend it on themselves only in so far as is necessary; the remainder they give away in God's path. Unbelievers consider money as a means of future security, but believers use it to ensure their prosperity in life-everlasting. Making a living is important for everyone, but believers should ensure that this task is accomplished in an honest manner, and then be happy with their lot. Unbelievers tend to be arbitrary in their methods and never cease to want more.



EDUCATION

Knowledge is of two kinds: that which has been set forth in the Qur'an and the Hadith, and that which we acquire by our own research and endeavours. The first form of knowledge acquaints us with our Lord. It explains the issues we will have to face in the everlasting world that is waiting for us after death. It shows us how preparation can be made in this life to meet those issues. The second form of knowledge provides solutions to the everyday, social and economic problems we encounter in this world.

Muslims should seek both forms of knowledge. They should be familiar with both secular and religious sciences, although they vary in the degree of their importance. Knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith should be the basic aim in life, and knowledge of other sciences a worldly necessity. Without knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith, one cannot understand what must be done in this world for one to earn everlasting salvation. The secular sciences, on the other hand, guide us in worldly matters. They instruct us in the



practicalities of life. Knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith shows the way to building for eternity; other knowledge is a guide to worldly development alone.

It is just as important for a Muslim to study various branches of knowledge as it is for anyone else, but the Muslim should differentiate between aim and necessity. He studies the Qur'an and the Hadith for different reasons from those which prompt him to seek worldly knowledge.



THE MOSQUE

Whereas there is a plethora of old forts in most countries, they are remarkably scarce in Muslim lands. The skyline of Muslim towns is dominated more by the lofty minarets of mosques. This shows the difference between the Islamic and non-Islamic temperament. Non-Muslims rely on their own strategies; Muslims place total trust in God. This explains why non-Muslims have always erected forts for their own protection and security, while Muslims have built mosques wherever they achieved supremacy. Massive castles testify to man's greatness, whereas mosques, in which Muslims glorify God, are a reminder to present and future generations of the greatness of God.

A mosque is, locally, a focal point for Muslims, just as the Ka'bah in Makkah is for Muslims all over the world. The Ka'bah is a world religious centre and the mosque a local one. That is why the same word for the direction in which one faces to pray—*qiblah* has been used in the Qur'an for both the Holy Ka'bah and also local mosques. Prayer is a symbol of a life of faith, and houses of worship, mosques,



are for the performance of that act of faith on a local level and, in the case of Makkah and Madinah, on an international level.

Muslims gather five times a day to pray in the mosque. The mosque is their natural religious centre. That is why the Prophet encouraged us to build mosques in the centres of towns. The situation of mosques, and the activities which are conducted in them, are in themselves an invitation to people to come together for worship of their Lord.



ISLAM AND INFIDELITY

Islam is acknowledgement and infidelity is denial. Man may seem to be free to do or say what he likes in the world, but, in reality, everything belongs to God. Whatever anybody has is His gift. Nobody, save God, has any power. God is always in a position to seize and punish man. Islam is acknowledgement of this fact and believers live in accordance with it. Infidelity is denial and unwillingness to base one's life on a realistic foundation.

A man can put his hand into a blazing fire if he wants to, but he refrains from doing so: he bows to reality. The freedom which man seems to enjoy in this world is only a test. Only if man is free, can it become clear who chooses to rebel against reality and who acknowledges it and submits to God. If one accepts God's divinity and bases one's life on reality, then one has truly embraced Islam and can enjoy God's everlasting blessings. If one denies this reality and refuses to accept God as Master, and be His servant, then one's action amounts to unbelief



and one will be exposed to dreadful punishment on the Day of Judgement.

To accept the Islamic way entails undergoing an immense change within oneself. It means that one's thoughts, actions and treatment of others take on the most proper and most exemplary form imaginable, for one's whole life will then be in harmony with reality. Unbelievers tend to contradict reality in everything that they do. Their actions can only lead them to their doom.



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND GOD

It is written in the Qur'an: "And when My servants question you concerning Me, tell them that I am close at hand. I answer the prayer of the suppliant when he cries to Me. So let them hear My call and let them trust in Me, in order they may be led aright." (2:186). This shows that the relationship between man and God is reciprocal: man offers God what he has, then God bestows His favours in return. Man offers his Lord a gift of realization, piety and thankfulness. In return, God provides him with eternal guidance and prosperity.

Man can deal with any problem in either of two ways: the pious and morally proper way, or the way in which such values are abandoned. The correct answer to the call of God is for one to use one's intellect to ascertain the right course of action and then follow it, difficult as it may seem. One then automatically avoids the easy, though misguided, way.



Sometimes one is faced with the choice between callous and unjust action on the one hand and righteous, fair treatment on the other. If one answers God's call as it should be answered, one will not flinch from the righteous path and will refrain from oppression and cruelty.

Man is free to consider what he has, within him and outside, to be the result of chance; alternatively he may look at it all as the fruits of his efforts; or he can acknowledge reality and consider it all as having come from God. A person who adopts this latter course will answer the call of God implicit in every blessing by exclaiming, "Lord, You are the bestower and You have given us everything!" When one has offered one's mind and heart to God in this way, then God will provide one with guidance, which means a righteous life in this world and eternal paradise in the next.



DO AS YOU WOULD BE DONE BY

Why is it that supplications made to God often go unheeded? The reason is that people ask God for that which they themselves are not prepared to give to others. They ask God for protection against oppression, but they are the first to inflict it on others when they have the chance. They ask God to safeguard their lives and property, yet are quick to kill and seize someone else's property if they can. They ask God for an honourable life, yet are quite happy to humiliate others. They ask God to protect them from enemy plots, yet they plot the destruction of anybody with whom they disagree. One must be sincere in whatever one is praying for. One's supplication should emanate from one's innermost being. It should not just be empty words. When one is sincere, one's life becomes devoid of contradictions. No difference remains between what one prays for and what one practices. If one really detests cruelty and objects to others indulging in it, then one will never resort to it oneself. If one stoops to persecuting others, then one cannot be sincere when one protests about being persecuted. The prayer of a person who does not put words into



action will not be graced by divine acceptance. If one is causing conflict among people, yet at the same time praying for harmony, one's prayer must seem more like a jest to God, and can earn one only retribution. For prayers to be acceptable, it is essential that one should give others what one seeks for oneself. One should treat others with the same mercy and compassion as one desires for oneself. Otherwise one's prayer will be an offence rather than a supplication before God.